

John Lutz House
(now the Aged Woman's Home
formerly the Female Union Benevolent Society)
1255 Wisconsin Avenue
Washington (Georgetown)
District of Columbia

HABS No. DC-105

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
1730 North Lynn Street
Arlington, Virginia

JOHN LUTZ HOUSE (Now THE AGED WOMAN'S
HOME OF GEORGETOWN, formerly known as
THE FEMALE UNION BENEVOLENT SOCIETY OF
GEORGETOWN)

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Location: 1255 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C.
(Note: Prior to 1881, Wisconsin Avenue was called High Street and had different address numbers. From 1881 to 1906, Wisconsin Avenue was known as 32nd Street and had present address numbers.)

Present Owner: Aged Woman's Home of Georgetown; Miss Margaret Weaver, 2029 Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., Washington, D.C. Miss Weaver is the president of the Home.

Present Occupant: Aged Woman's Home

Present Use: Home for 14 women

Statement of Significance: A portion of the building has a rare "flounder" half-gable, is alleged to date from 1756, and has associations with historic persons. One of the few residences in the Georgetown commercial district.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners: The building is located in Square 1208, part of lot 1 in Beatty and Hawkins addition to Georgetown and part of lot 1 in "The Slip" now taxed as lot 865 in Square 1208. The following is an incomplete chain of title to the land on which the building was built.

1851 Deed May 31, 1851 recorded in
Liber J.A.S. 25 folio 446
John Lutz
To

Adelaide M. Lutz

1872 Deed in Trust February 8, 1871 recorded
April 4, 1872 in Liber 672 folio 370
Adelaide M. Lutz
To

Hugh Caperton

Walter S. Cox

William L. Dunlop

Trustees for the Female Union Benevolent Society of
Georgetown

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1929 Deed December 17, 1929 recorded December 23, 1929
in Liber 6406 folio 82
Sarah N. Dunlop, widow and devisee under last will
of William L. Dunlop, deceased,
and William L. Dunlop et al
To
Aged Woman's Home of Georgetown, Corp. D.C.

Note: Hugh Caperton died September 14, 1877.
Walter S. Cox died June 25, 1902. William L.
Dunlop died October 23, 1916 leaving the trust to
his heirs. They included Sarah M. Dunlop, his
widow, and William L. Dunlop and James B. Dunlop,
his sons.

2. Date of erection: Oldest portion of the house alleged to have been built in 1756 with an addition to the front in 1870 and to the rear in 1872. (Information sheet entitled The Aged Woman's Home of Georgetown by Evelyn Moore, Chairman of Public Relations).
3. Architect: Not known.
4. Original plans, construction, etc: None known.
5. Notes on alterations and additions: Addition of front rooms and hall in 1870 and rooms to the rear in 1872 (Moore, op. cit.). Modern addition of rooms to the rear. (Interview with Mrs. Thomas, resident matron: August 3, 1966).
6. Important old views: None located.

B. Historical Events Connected with the Structure:

John Lutz, a Revolutionary War veteran who had served as General George Washington's bodyguard at Valley Forge, came to Georgetown to establish a leather goods business and in 1804 purchased this house.

"A copy of the letter written to Col. Lutz by Martha Parke Custis hangs on the wall of the home. It expresses the gratitude and affection of the entire Washington family for the gallant soldier." (Moore, op. cit.). Lutz situated his shop across the street where it remained until after 1834 when the place of business was moved to downtown Washington. In 1956 the establishment was closed. Colonel John Lutz's grandson, also named John, became one of the most important producers in the theatrical world of the

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mid-nineteenth century and was married to an outstanding actress of the day - Miss Laura Keane, who was cast in the lead of "Our American Cousin" at Ford's Theatre the night that Lincoln was assassinated.

In 1868 an organization called "The Female Union Benevolent Society" was formed in order to provide refuge to women stranded in Washington and Georgetown. The Lutz house was purchased for this purpose and a campaign conducted to raise funds. Ample publicity was given this campaign as evidenced in the following newspaper items:

The Evening Star Feb 17, 1868 Monday

Affairs in Georgetown

"The Aged Woman's Home

A fair is being held at Forrest Hall, under the auspices of the Union Benevolent Society of Georgetown, and managed by ladies of all religious denominations for the benefit of indigent and infirm old women. The following ladies have the affair in charge: Miss Mary Thomson, Mrs. Johnson, Mrs. Kidwell, Mrs. and Miss Seymour, Mrs. Holse, Mrs. Hill, Mrs. Doolittle, Mrs. Webster, Mrs. and Misses Gangewer, Hein, Barbarin, Taylor, David and Nourse. The New England kitchen forms quite an attraction, and so does the picture gallery, containing some of the finest specimens of art, both ancient and modern."

The Evening Star Feb 21, 1868 Friday

Affairs in Georgetown

"Humorous Lecture

The people of Georgetown seldom have such a literary treat in store for them as is offered them tomorrow evening when "Mark Twain", the well-known humorist, will enlighten them as to various matters of interest. The best of this statement is that it is for the benefit of the Old Woman's Home. The merit of the lecture, however, would fill Forrest Hall without the additional inducement of benefitting the poor."

"A windfall came when W. W. Corcoran, who founded the Corcoran Art Gallery, gave them a check for fifteen thousand dollars, with the stipulation that only the interest could be spent. 'For,' said Mr. Corcoran, 'no one woman or group of women is capable of spending such a large sum.'" (Moore, op. cit.).

On June 20, 1914 the Female Union Benevolent Society became a body corporate under the name Aged Woman's Home of Georgetown by certificate of incorporation.

Prepared by Dr. James Philip Noffeinger
Architect
National Park Service
August 17, 1966

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Probably one of the earliest extant structures in Georgetown, the John Lutz house has been tripled in size during its long history. The original central section is of the rare half-gabled "flounder" form with roof sloping sharply from north to south. A casual glance suggests a date of around 1840 for the front (west) section, which is remarkably retardaire in style, but the front door trim and interior finish make the given date of 1870 plausible. Thanks to long ownerships and a site on a rise away from the street, the house is one of the least-altered and best-maintained buildings in the Georgetown commercial area.
2. Condition of fabric: Exterior is in good condition; interiors are intact and well-maintained.

B. Technical Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: Approximately 20' (three bays across street facade) x 97'; two stories in height. Irregular plan is roughly rectangular: additions to the original structure are very evident in elevation and plan, as apparently no attempts were made to blend later and earlier structures into a unified whole.
2. Foundations: Brick to just above grade, stone under.
3. Wall construction: Original and later structures are of common bond brick masonry. On west (street) elevation, headers occur every six courses; elsewhere, notably on north and south elevations of original structure, headers are irregularly spaced, occurring most often at intervals of three, four or six courses.

The west (street) elevation is unaltered and is marred only by shear cracks in the brick between upper and lower windows of central and north bays. Alteration is evident on the original structure, particularly on the north

elevation, and additions to the east. Evidence of repair below central window on north elevation of original structure indicates that the aperture was once a doorway. Also worthy of note is alteration in brickwork below the chimney on northeast corner of main east addition, which suggests that this portion may originally have had a lower roof.

4. Chimneys: Four brick chimneys 1'-8" x 2'-4" in dimension extend above end walls of west addition on either side of roof ridge; chimneys have two-course projecting brick capping at top except northeast stack of this group, which has three-course cap, and small 1'-4" square brick chimney on northeast corner of main east addition, which has three-course projecting brick capping. Modern galvanized metal pipe approximately 1' in diameter is centrally placed on north elevation of original structure.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Doorway on south bay of west facade is only access from street. Wide wooden frame defines opening in which is set glazed transom above double three-paneled screen door. Heavy wooden cornice resting upon two large and three smaller ornamental consoles is set well above transom. Within doorway is a vestibule with a closet set into the north side. The main door is composed of eight glazed panels above two wooden inset panels.

Numerous supplementary doors are simple in design. Door on north elevation is near northeast corner of main east addition. On the south, door near southeast corner of west addition and doors of original building and east addition open on garden area. Rooms on the second floor open on wooden gallery which serves as open passageway from west to east sections. Modern iron stairway descends from southeast corner of gallery.
 - b. Windows and shutters: Six-over-six-light double-hung wooden sash windows on west facade have stone lintels, and sills and two-paneled wooden shutters. North windows on west and center sections are set under flat arches, those on the east under segmental arches formed by two courses of header rowlocks.
6. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Tin roof of west addition is gabled, ridge running north-south, does not relate to original roof which slopes steeply from north to south. At least

three separate roofs (in plan) cover eastern additions; they appear to be flat, although accurate evaluation of roofs east of original structure is difficult from grade.

- b. Framing: Wood.
- c. Cornice, eaves: Four-course brick band spans facade to within 4" of each end on (west) facade. Three-course band above this reaches eave line, spans to within 2" of sides. Second band has brick dentils, two courses high, formed by headers projecting from band; these occur on a 1:1 proportion from side to side.
- d. Dormers: Two metal-sheathed dormers on roof of original structure have not been described because of evaluation difficulties on site.

C. Technical Description of Interior:

- 1. Floor plans: Wide hallway runs depth of west addition. Double doors open into two large rooms north of hall, which are connected by double doorway. Main stair hall (original entrance) opens to north from east end of hallway, forming base of L in plan. Original section includes main stair hall, large east and west rooms connected through what was originally a closet (original doorway was to north of present connection), and a secondary stairway at east end. On second floor, west addition has four rooms and central (east-west) hallway. Rooms of original section open onto south gallery. Informally planned rooms of eastern section are some 2' lower than adjoining room in original portion.
- 2. Stairs: Wooden main stairway rises south-north between rooms in west addition and those in original structure. Secondary stairway at east end of original structure leads to gallery and easternmost rooms.
- 3. Flooring: Random width pine.
- 4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plastered walls and ceiling above matchboard wainscoting.
- 5. Doorways and doors: Doors of wood, simple wooden casings.
- 6. Trim: Chair-rails in second-floor hallways. A south window in the original building bears the etched names "A. M. Lutz Wm May."
- 7. Hardware: Nothing outstanding recorded.
- 8. Lighting: Incandescent.

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9. Heating: Steam. Fireplaces in all upper rooms of west addition, west room of original building, west room of west addition and elsewhere are unused.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: 1870 addition faces west by southwest toward Wisconsin Avenue, N.W., between M and N Streets. House is sited above steep rise and is approximately 25' from sidewalk. Original building faces south toward what must have been a commanding view, now impeded by later construction. Site remains relatively airy and quiet, despite proximity to commercial thoroughfare.
2. Enclosures: The front property line is defined by a recent brick retaining wall nearly three feet high of common bond with headers every six courses and brick coping of header rowlocks. At the back, a wooden fence encloses the yard.
3. Outbuildings: None.
4. Walks: A camant stairway of 19 risers leads from the public sidewalk on Wisconsin Avenue to grade on the west elevation. A small informal brick walk on the south and east is laid in a chevron pattern.
5. Landscaping: Informal planting in the front yard to the west is on two terraces formed by brick retaining wall, and stone retaining wall at an intermediate height. Planting in back yard through which the brick walk runs is even less formal.

Prepared by Thomas R. Martinson
Student Assistant Architect
National Park Service
August 21, 1966